

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANILA 04661 141003Z

16

ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSCE-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00 USIE-00

INR-05 SP-02 PRS-01 IO-03 L-01 PM-03 SSO-00 NSC-05

EB-03 /044 W

----- 128368

P R 140842Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2208

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 4661

LIMDIS

DEPT PASS WHITE HOUSE, DOD, USIA, CIA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, RP, US

SUBJECT: PHILIPPINES "REASSESSING" SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS WITH US

1. ALL MAJOR MANILA NEWSPAPERS MAY 13 CARRIED BANNER
HEADLINE STORIES STATING THAT PHILIPPINES IS REASSESSING
ITS SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS WITH U.S. IN LIGHT U.S.
"ABANDONMENT OF CAMBODIA AND VIET-NAM." STORY WHICH
QUOTES HIGH GOVERNMENT SOURCES, MAKES FOLLOWING POINTS:
DELICATE BALANCE OF POWER IN ASIA SEEMS TO TEETER ON
EDGE OF DANGER AND MAY HAVE BEEN WRECKED BY OCCURRENCES
AND DEVELOPMENTS OF LAST SEVERAL MONTHS. HARD-HEADED
REASSESSMENTS OF PHILIPPINE-AMERICAN SECURITY RELATIONS
PREDICATED ON APPARENT NEW AMERICAN PERCEPTION OF ITS
COMMITMENTS TO ITS ALLIES, PARTICULARLY IN ASIA:
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PAGE 02 MANILA 04661 141003Z

PHILIPPINES DISTURBED BY EMERGING VIEW THAT COMMITMENTS

MADE BY AMERICAN PRESIDENTS ARE NOTHING MORE THAN STATEMENTS OF INTENT THAT DO NOT BIND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, THE CONGRESS, OR THE GOVERNMENT. CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIET-NAM, LIKE THE PHILIPPINES, HAVE DEFENSE TREATIES WITH THE UNITED STATES. IN VIEW U.S. TURNABOUTS IN CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIET-NAM, STRENGTH OF U.S. PAPER GUARANTEE TO PHILIPPINES SERIOUSLY PLACED IN QUESTION AND GOVERNMENT SOURCES DOUBT TODAY THAT SECURITY PROVISOR OF MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY WOULD BE HONORED BY U.S. WHILE WE HAVE THESE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS WITH U.S., WE HAVE ALWAYS RELIED ON NO ONE BUT OURSELVES, AND THIS POLICY OF SELF-RELIANCE UNDERSCORES NEED TO REEXAMINE ARRANGEMENTS THAT COULD PROVE TO BE A LIABILITY, RATHER THAN ANYTHING ELSE. WE HAVE TO ASK OURSELVES WHETHER WE CAN CONTINUE TO BE INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICTS AND ANIMOSITIES ENGENDERED BY POLICIES THAT ARE NOT OUR OWN. WHAT IS NOW BEING UNDERTAKEN BY THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT IS AN UPDATED STUDY ON HOW USEFUL THE U.S. BASES ARE TO THE PHILIPPINES.

2. WHILE THIS OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT POSITION OWES MUCH OF ITS INSPIRATION TO GENUINE CONCERN ABOUT U.S. INTENTIONS IN ASIA, AND WHILE IT WAS DOUBTLESS INFLUENCED IN PART BY THE ATMOSPHERICS SURROUNDING CEAUCESCU VISIT, ITS MOST PROXIMATE CAUSE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN CONSPICUOUS ABSENCE ANY MENTION WHATSOEVER OF PHILIPPINES IN PRESIDENT FORD'S FOREIGN POLICY SPEECH WHICH TOUGHED ON AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, INDONESIA, SINGAPORE, JAPAN, AND SOUTH KOREA. MANY FILIPINOS, ALWAYS SENSITIVE TO U.S. UTTERANCES, HAVE INTERPRETED THIS CIRCUMSTANCE TO ASSUMPTION THAT U.S. HAS "REASSESSED" PHILIPPINES OUT OF ITS SECURITY COMMITMENTS.

3. EMBASSY WILL BE HARD PUT TO EXPLAIN U.S. POSITION WITHOUT FURTHER WASHINGTON GUIDANCE. IF OMISSION OF PHILIPPINES WAS DELIBERATE AND REPRESENTS CONCLUSION THAT U.S. MILITARY BASES, VOA INSTALLATIONS, AND OTHER FACILITIES IN THIS COUNTRY ARE VIEWED WITH DIMINISHED VALUE IN OUR NEW GLOBAL POSTURE, EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE INSTRUCTIONS SOONEST ON MANNER IN WHICH DEPARTMENT WISHES US TO SHARE THIS CONCLUSION WITH OUR PHILIPPINE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MANILA 04661 141003Z

ALLIES. IT WILL BE APPRECIATED THAT CAREFUL PLANNING WILL BE REQUIRED TO HANDLE THIS SORT OF READJUSTMENT IN AN ORDERLY WAY.

4. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, OMISSION OF PHILIPPINES WAS INADVERTENT, EMBASSY BELIEVED CURRENT DAMAGE CAN BE CONTAINED, BUT AT SOME PREDICTABLE COST. PHILIPPINES

WILL PROBABLY POSE ISSUE IN SPANISH TERMS; I.E., U.S.
EITHER
GIVE AN IRON-CLAD COMMITMENT GO AUTOMATIC DEFENSE
OF PHILIPPINES, OR ELSE SHIFT U.S. MILITARY BASE RIGHTS
TO A RENTAL ARRANGEMENT.

5. SINCE PHILIPPINE LEADERSHIP SERIOUSLY DOUBTS U.S.
SENATE WILL ACCEPT AUTOMATIC DEFENSE COMMITMENT, THEIR
FOCUS WILL DOUBTLESS BE ON BASE RENTALS. EMBASSY
ESTIMATES SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT CAN BE WORKED OUT WITH
REASONABLE GOOD WILL, AND CALCULATES COST TO U.S. WILL
PROBABLY RUN IN NEIGHBORHOOD OF THREE HUNDRED MILLION
DOLLARS OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

6. SINCE WE CAN DOUBTLESS EXPECT OFFICIAL DEMARCHE OF SOME
SORT IN NEAR FUTURE TO FOLLOW UP THIS PRESS BARRAGE,
REQUEST DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS SOONEST.
SULLIVAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, COLLECTIVE SECURITY AGREEMENTS, MILITARY BASE LEASES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MANILA04661
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750129-0416
From: MANILA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750454/aaaabyjy.tel
Line Count: 133
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUL 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <14 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PHILIPPINES "REASSESSING" SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS WITH US
TAGS: PFOR, MARR, RP, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006